

THE REINTRODUCTION OF THE SHINGLES PREVENTION ACT

HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Ms. HIRONO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce the Shingles Prevention Act. I would like to thank NEIL ABERCROMBIE, TAMMY BALDWIN, DONNA EDWARDS, BARNEY FRANK, AL GREEN, RAUL GRIJALVA, MAURICE HINCHEY, JIM McDERMOTT, JAN SCHAKOWSKY, LOUISE SLAUGHTER, and GENE TAYLOR for joining me as original cosponsors of this bill.

Many of us have had shingles or know of others, especially over the age of 60, who have. In 2006 a new vaccine was created that prevents occurrence of shingles or dramatically reduces the symptoms and pain of shingles. Experts agree that adults over the age of 60 should receive this immunization.

Half of us will experience shingles by the time we are 80. Shingles is a painful skin rash often accompanied by fever, headache, chills, and upset stomach. What is more pressing is that one in five shingles patients will endure post-herpetic neuralgia—severe pain lasting much longer than the rash itself. The pain can be so intolerable that patients are housebound, and there have been cases of suicide from the disease. Shingles is most common among seniors because the immune system wanes with age, making Medicare beneficiaries the best candidates for the vaccine.

Since its development in 2006, the shingles vaccine has been recommended for adults 60 years or older by the Centers for Disease Control. However, current Medicare Part D coverage of the vaccine is insufficient. Not all beneficiaries are enrolled in Part D or another drug prescription plan. More important, seniors are facing high out-of-pocket costs due to a lack of coordination among doctors, pharmacies, and Part D plans. For example, there is no established direct billing method between doctors and plans for Part D vaccines. Because of this, beneficiaries typically must pay the full price up front, which results in out-of-pocket costs that limit access to those that need the vaccine the most—our seniors.

The billing problem, the resulting low utilization of the vaccine, and costly storage requirements are enough to keep many doctors from stocking the vaccine. When doctors do not stock, beneficiaries' only alternative is to obtain the vaccine from pharmacists. But many states do not allow pharmacies to administer Part D vaccines, so the beneficiary has to take the vial from the pharmacy back to the physician's office. Thus, a senior who is thinking about getting vaccinated would have to go first to the doctor's office for a consult, then to the pharmacist, then back to the doctor for the shot.

Not surprisingly, many seniors are not getting immunized against shingles. This low utilization rate contributes to the half a billion dollars of treatment costs per year and, for hundreds of thousands of seniors, many weeks spent suffering from a disease that could have been prevented.

The Shingles Prevention Act will move shingles vaccine coverage to Part B—thus treating it in the same manner as the flu vaccine under Medicare, simplifying the process for physicians and beneficiaries, and lessening the cost

burden for our seniors. This is a common sense and cost effective way to increase access to high quality health care for our seniors, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure its passage.

ANNIVERSARY OF DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF KOSOVO

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the first anniversary of the declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo. February 17, 2008 brought an important measure of clarity and vision to the future of Kosovo—and indeed the entire region—with the resounding declaration by the Kosovar people that Kosovo is an independent republic.

Almost one year to the day, members and supporters of Michigan's Albanian community will gather on February 15 at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Rochester Hills, Michigan to commemorate and celebrate the first anniversary of Kosovo's independence. On that day, I will join Dom Anton Kqira and Honorary General Counsel to Albania Ekrem Bardha, and hundreds more to commemorate this historic occasion.

There, we will honor and recognize the determination and perseverance of the Kosovar people, who under the special leadership of President Ibrahim Rugova forged a path for their own future. We will honor and recognize our own community leaders in Michigan, including Dom Kqira and Counsel General Bardha, who tirelessly pressed for official action to address the crisis in Kosovo and we will honor and recognize those leaders of our own country, President William J. Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and General Wesley Clark (Ret.) among others, who took the action in March of 1999 that laid the foundation for Kosovo independence. Finally, we will honor and recognize the countless members of the Albanian Diaspora community who provided shelter, material and moral support to the nearly 800,000 displaced Kosovars during the crisis.

Madam Speaker, as we mark this occasion of the first anniversary of the independence of Kosovo we hold much hope for the future of an independent Kosovo. But, with sober recognition of the work yet ahead, we stand fully committed to meeting every challenge.

CONDOLENCES TO THE SHURRAB FAMILY

HON. PETER WELCH

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Mr. WELCH. Madam Speaker, I recently heard the tragic story of Amer Shurrab, a young man from Khan Yunis in Gaza. Amer is a recent graduate of Middlebury College, in Vermont.

On Friday, January 16, Amer's brothers, Kassab and Ibrahim, and father, Mohammad, were driving from their farm near the Israeli

border to their apartment in Khan Yunis. The three men had waited until the daily three-hour calm designated by the Israeli Defense Forces before beginning their journey. They drove the family's jeep through the city and then, without any warning, the car was fired upon by the IDF.

Kassab, a 28-year-old engineer, was killed almost immediately. His father and Ibrahim, an 18-year-old college student, were wounded but survived the initial barrage of gunfire. When the two tried to crawl to safety, the IDF shot the street around them. An ambulance that they managed to call was turned away blocks from the scene. For the next 20 hours, the two were forced to remain in the jeep.

Amer's father spread the word to the immediate family, and the family did all it could to get help. Family members called Israeli government officials, international aid organizations, and human rights groups, while Amer's father, still stuck in the jeep, managed to get through to local radio stations and BBC Arabic to broadcast his pleas for help live on the air. But no help could get through. In the middle of the night, Ibrahim Shurrab bled to death in his father's arms. When relating his story, Amer repeated one word over and over again to describe what happened to his family: cruel. "It was just so cruel," he repeated.

The Israeli government must conduct a full and open investigation of the circumstances regarding this horrible tragedy. I am not sure what kind of explanation can ever account for such suffering, but those responsible for reportedly denying aid to the injured should be held accountable and punished accordingly.

My heart aches for the Shurrab family and all those who have lost loved ones in the most recent round of violence. I will remember their story and pursue peace in the hope that stories like Amer's not be repeated in the future.

REMEMBERING THE SIX VICTIMS OF THE 1/31/09 AIRPLANE CRASH IN WEST VIRGINIA

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to express my condolences to the family and friends of the six Chicago-area residents who were recently killed in an airplane crash in West Virginia.

On January 31, a twin-engine Piper PA-34 plane carrying four members of Chicago's American Polish Aero-Club and two guests crashed in the woods near Kenova, West Virginia. The plane had taken off from Lake in the Hills Airport and was bound for Charlotte, North Carolina and Clearwater, Florida, where the four members of the club were going to view planes for sale. The club was hoping to purchase a plane to pull glider planes, according to President Chester Wojnicki.

The four club members were all licensed pilots, and all four had immigrated to the United States from Poland. Ireneusz Michalowski of Des Plaines, Kazimierz Adamski of Morton Grove, Wesley Dobrzanski of Niles, and Stanley Matras of Chicago shared not only their cultural heritage but also their love of flying. Also aboard the plane were Monika Niemiec, a reporter for a local Polish radio show, and

her father Stanley Niemiec, both of Harwood Heights.

The Polish American Aero-Club is, by its own claim, the largest Polish flying club outside of Poland. Its approximately 60 members form a close-knit community of enthusiasts who fly both regular planes and gliders. Like the four members killed in the crash, many of the club's members came to the United States from Poland to seek new opportunities.

During this difficult time, Chicago's Polish American community continues to demonstrate strength and resilience as it celebrates the lives of the victims. About 1,000 mourners came together for a memorial service for the victims, held at St. Constance Catholic Church in Chicago, on February 1.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me tonight in remembering the six men and women who were killed in this tragic crash. I wish to express my sincere condolences to the families and all the friends of the victims. Our entire community has been diminished as a result of this tragedy. On behalf of all the residents of the Ninth District, I extend a hand of friendship and a heart filled with sorrow to all those who knew and loved them.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BUDGET AUTONOMY ACT OF 2009

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, on February 3, 2009, I intended to introduce my budget autonomy bill. I submitted the following introductory statement for the RECORD on that day. It appears that the wrong bill was attached inadvertently. Today, I correct that mistake by introducing the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act of 2009.

As we approach a vote on the D.C. House Voting Rights Act of 2009, it is not too early in the session to begin the next steps necessary to make the residents of the District of Columbia genuinely free and equal citizens. Other than to voting rights, the highest priority for District of Columbia residents in the 111th Congress is their right to control the funds they themselves raise to support their city. Budget control is essential to the right to self-government. Therefore, today, I am introducing the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act of 2009 to give the District the right to enact its local budget without annual congressional oversight.

As a practical matter, permitting the city's budget to become law without coming to Congress would have multiple and immediate benefits for both the city and Congress. For the city, a timely budget means: eliminating the uncertainty of the congressional process that has a negative effect of the city's bond rating, which adds unnecessary interest costs for local taxpayers to pick up; significantly increasing the District's ability to make accurate revenue forecasts; and reducing the countless operational problems, large and small, that result because the city's budget cannot be implemented when enacted by the city. Of the many problems that would be eliminated, none is more important than aligning the school year with the typical state government July 1st

fiscal year, instead of the congressional fiscal year, which starts in October, after the school year has begun.

Leaving the local enactment to the District would bring benefits to Congress as well. The D.C. budget often has had to come to the floor repeatedly before it passes because of controversial attachments, often of interest only to a few members who use the D.C. appropriations to promote their pet ideological issues. Members then complain about the time and effort spent on the smallest appropriations that affect no other members. No budget autonomy bill can eliminate the possibility of riders because there are countless ways to attach riders, but our bill reduces the likelihood that unrelated riders will hold the city's local budget hostage and sometimes the appropriations process itself.

I am gratified that Congress itself has moved toward the position embodied in this bill. Congressional experience with the District's budget has matured, and neither party has made changes in recent years. At the same time, increasing recognition of the hardship and delays that the annual appropriations process causes has led Congress to begin freeing the city from the congressional appropriations network. In 2006, Congress approved the Mid-year Budget Autonomy bill, offering the first freedom from the federal appropriations process, the most important structural change for the city since passage of the Home Rule Act 36 years ago. As a result, the District can now spend its local funds all year without congressional approval instead of having to return mid-year to become a part of the federal supplemental appropriation in order to spend funds collected since the annual appropriations bill. Moreover, during the past few years, appropriators have responded to our concern about the hardships resulting from delays in enacting the D.C. appropriation. I appreciate our agreement that has allowed the local D.C. budget to be in the first continuing resolution, permitting the city, uniquely, to spend its local funds at the next year's level, even though the budgets for federal agencies are often delayed for months. This approach has ended the lengthy delay of the budget of a big city until an omnibus appropriations bill is filed, often months after October 1st.

There is no risk to the Congress passing the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act. By definition, Congress will retain jurisdiction over the District of Columbia under Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution because the District is not a state. Since, therefore, Congress could in any case make changes in the District's budget and laws at will, it is unnecessary to require a lengthy repetition of the District's budget process here. The redundancy of the congressional appropriations process is its most striking feature, considering that few if any changes in the budget itself are made.

The original Senate version of the Home Rule Act provided for budget autonomy, and 210 years of redundant processing of a local budget and delays occasioned by the extra layer of oversight offer conclusive evidence that the time is overdue to permit the city to enact its local budget, the single most important step the Congress could take to help the District manage the city.

Members of Congress were sent here to do the business of the Nation. They have no reason to be interested in or to become knowledgeable about the many complicated provi-

sions of the local budget of a single city. In good times and in bad, the House and Senate pass the District's budget as is. Our bill takes the Congress in the direction it is moving already based on its own experience. Congressional interference into one of the vital rights to self-government should end this year with enactment of the District of Columbia Budget Autonomy Act.

HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF CHIRICAHUA APACHE LEADER GOYATHAY, ALSO KNOWN AS GERONIMO, ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, as Democratic Chairman of the House Native American Caucus, it is my distinct honor to join my friend and colleague Congressman RAÚL GRIJALVA in support of H. Res. 132. This resolution honors the life and extraordinary bravery of Geronimo, the great Chiricahua Apache leader, and recognizes the 100th anniversary of his death on February 17, 2009, as a time of reflection and the commencement of healing for the Apache people.

Geronimo, a spiritual and intellectual leader, became recognized as a great military leader by his people because of his courage, determination, and skill. He led his people in a war as the Apache homeland was invaded by citizens and armies first of Mexico, and then the United States. While the Apache people were forcibly removed by the United States and interned at San Carlos, Arizona, Geronimo led some of his people out of captivity and evaded military forces for several years. Upon surrendering to the United States, Geronimo and other Apache prisoners were interned in military prisons in Florida, Alabama and Oklahoma, far from their homeland. Geronimo died on February 17, 1909, and was buried in a military cemetery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

The Apache people continue to honor and hold sacred Geronimo's efforts to preserve their traditional way of life and to defend their homeland. While we cannot erase the deplorable history of Indian policy in the United States to terminate tribal nations and their culture, perhaps this resolution will bring about a healing among the Apache people and their children will look back at their history and be proud that the United States paid tribute to Geronimo, a great Apache warrior.

As the San Carlos Apache Tribe and other Apache tribes across the country gather on February 17, 2009, in San Carlos, Arizona to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Geronimo's death, I wish them Godspeed as they begin their journey of spiritual healing.

CELEBRATING ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S 200TH BIRTHDAY

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 12, 2009

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the 200th birthday of our sixteenth